

The Acts.

CHAP. II.

AN D the young man tarried not until he came to the metropolis of Syria, where he shewed the judges of the great king all that had been done unto him, and the contempt with which their commandments had been treated.

2. And the fear of the wrath of the great king, and of his judges, worked mightily in the chief magistrate, and in the rulers of the people.

3. But in S——s it worked not at all, because by lawyers-craft he had shifted the cup of tribulation to the other rulers, and given them to drink of the bitterness thereof; and he laughed inwardly in his sleeve, as the hyæn laughed when his wiles succeed, and said, a ha! it is even so, I am escaped from the net.

4. And the chief magistrate wanted to laugh and to say a ha! but could not, because he feared the bay fever, and that it would happen to him as had been prophesied.

5. Nevertheless he grinned, to hide the anguish of his heart; and that the people might not suspect it was otherwise than well with him.

6. And when he returned to his house, tribulation, and fear, and remorse, and discord, and the 9th. of Anne followed at his heels and entered within him, and would needs tarry there.

7. And when the chief magistrate found that these unbidden guests would abide, his countenance waxed pale and shrivelled as a piece of baize; yea, it became altogether bloodless and white-livered as a LILLY.

8. [Now these guests had gone with the chief magistrate to the assembly of the people, when the young man came to be sworn in.

9. And being there, had occasioned a great tumult, inasmuch that the chief magistrate in his wrath threatened to adorn the authors thereof with ruffles of iron.

10. For he wist not where the tumult was; but had mistaken the tumult of his own heart, for a tumult of the people.

11. Albeit the people laughed him to scorn, and mocked his authority, far they saw how it was with him.]

12. So he retired to rest, and in the third watch of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men.

13. The curtains of his bed were shaken, and a vision stood before him, the form whereof was dark and void; and its appearance was that of a man bound with chains.

14. And in his right hand he bore a scrole whereon the name of the great and terrible beast Mandamus, which no man might utter, was written; and in his left the law of the good old Queen, which she had caused to be made, because she saw the harvest of lawyers craft and knavery was ripe in the land.

15. [Now the ripeness and plentifulness thereof hath occasioned the great king to be liberal to his neighbours, and to erect garners thereof in the land of plants; even in the tents of Botany.

16. That his mercy and justice might be known in the corners of the earth, and that these plants should be a memorial of his bounty for ever; for the nation has all other plants, but these they knew not.]

17. And at the terror of this vision, the chief magistrate shook with fear as though a palsy had seized him; yea, he sweated as an horse doth that hath the gullion.

18. And he gnashed with his teeth, and cursed the day that he left seeking the spinners craft and carrying letters; and exchanged the greasy chain of profitable wool, for the golden chain of authority which befitted him not.

19. And the terror of losing the pelf he had hoarded moved him fearfully; for he well knew he should lose all respect, when he lost the only thing respectable about him.

20. And when day-light appeared, he arose and went to the house of S——s, and related all that had befallen him; and S——s said as Satan said of old to the hermits, fear not, I will bring thee off at last.

21. And behold a great assembly had been gathered there, even those who scrupled not to do whatever Betty advised; but of the tribe of laps there was not one.

22. And after the blaspheming had ceased, S——s arose to speak; and his usual hesitation forsook him, and his tongue was loosed in his mouth, because Betty had privily advised him what to say.

23. And he said, Woe! Woe! Woe! to my manors, my castles, my farms, my lands, my country-houses, and my city-houses, my oxen and fatted sheep, my oysters, and my asses, my clerks, and my men servants, and maid servants.

24. Woe also, and tribulation unto my writing desks, my reading desks, my chests and strong boxes, and woe also to my lawyers craft.

25. For I shall no more be delighted therein, or rejoice in the exercise thereof.

26. And all this he said, because of the 700 shekels of gold which the judges of the great king had commanded him to pay to the tribe of laps.

27. For Betty had said, peradventure when the squad shall see thee down in the mouth, that they will each take his canvas bag and give unto thee, that which thou desirest.

28. And when the speech was finished, the squad groaned as they were instructed, but his canvas bag each pulled not out.

29. And they communed together and said, we will pay the 700 shekels out of the inheritance of the freemen, but out of our own canvas bags will we not pay it.

30. And this was done that the prophecy of old might be fulfilled, which says, "they were as generous churchwardens, which gave away what belonged not to them."

31. Nevertheless, S——s was satisfied therewith and rejoiced exceedingly, for his end was accomplished, as he had nailed the squad, through their ignorance; and the canvas bag of each had nailed; albeit they wist not how it might be.

32. And when the squad was departed, Betty was in astonishment at the great skill of S——s, and at his proficiency in the nailing art.

33. And she said, why laughest thou, and he said, knowest thou not how they be sheared.

34. So he told her how they had fallen in the pit he had dug for them, and as yet knew not their nasty situation, for their eyes were not opened.

35. Now when these things were done, there was an assembly of the wife men and elders of the people, and Betty and the help-mate of S——s had devised in their councils what to say to them.

36. And they called S——s and said, lo! thou shalt be as heretofore a lying spirit unto them, and a false spirit of divination shalt thou be, and shalt prophecy unto them as though it came from the judge of the great King.

37. And thou shalt talk to them, not about a story of a cock and a bull, but about a beast terrible and fierce having seven heads and ten horns, shalt thou talk.

38. And thou shalt call it Scire Facias; and the elders shall gaze and wonder at thy learning, and all that thou sayest shall believe, for they are of little understanding.

39. And they shall become afraid of the beast and of his wrath, and shall say among themselves, we shall all be kicked out like F——k, and with the horns of the beast shall we be thrust from our high places.

40. And this thou shalt say in the prophecy of the judge, if the young man is sworn into his office.

41. And S——s went unto the assembly, and did as was commanded him; and he called unto him a wife man who was also a seer and prophet of the name of Bezaliel.

42. Now Bezaliel was well skilled in prophecy, and could foretell when swift destruction should come upon a windmill.

43. Therefore he liked windmills of brick better than of wood; and those that liked windmills of brick also, he jeered, because they knew not the secret how to get them.

44. And this man was also a great orator and of cunning speech, but as for reading he knew little thereof.

45. For S——s has given him a paper filled with prophecy; but in-as-much as Bezaliel had not learned it, he gave the same to the scribe to read.

46. And when it had been read, the assembly cried out, it shall be even so; we will indemnify the chief magistrate out of the inheritance of the freemen.

47. Now it happened that they knew not that the estates were not of them, and that they belonged to others whom they could not master.

48. And that in the evil day which no man can avoid, vengeance and sure judgment would fall upon the head of every one.

49. And a man of small account, of the name of M——gs, rose up to speak, and his voice was in his belly, for he was a baker, and his lungs were dried up through heat of the furnace.

50. And he lived at Gilgal without the city: and S——s had betrayed his best friend to do him service.

51. And had stuck not to elevate his household, therefore had M——gs stuck like dough to S——s.

52. And this man had learned to prophecy; and he shouted and said,—I have baked and drawn the batch, see what it is I set before ye.

53. We will also pay the 700 shekels of gold for S——s out of the inheritance of the freemen.

54. And with much wining another prophet of the name of G——n arose, and his breath smelled not of the rose of Sharon, but of the stinking vapour of old cloaths, when the goose hath scorched them; for he had lived by the goose, and through the abundance of goose had prophesied.

55. And he wined and said; he is even persecuted, as a goose persecuted a backbiter in the borders.

56. Now a backbiter in the language of the snips, signifies a louse.

57. And after him another prophet arose of the name of Megging Tom, and he was so called because of his megging there was no end.

58. And this man believed that S——s was the messiah which was to save the people, and he had forgot how with bitter curses he had before cursed him, even as the dog Shimei cursed David in the days of old.

59. Nevertheless no man could say he had turned his coat, for it had been turned so often no man knew the right side thereof.

60. And being perched on his pins he megged exceedingly; inasmuch as he spared not to revile the dead, saying, behold S——s is an excellent recorder, and our old recorder is in no wise worthy to be compared to him.

61. And he spake well unknowingly, for no comparison could be made between the men.

62. And all these things were done readily; because all had been before ready out and dried at the house of S——s, and in the councils of Betty and his help mate.

63. Nevertheless, some few of the assembly marvelled much and wondered what it all meant; for they were of the uncircumcised with long ears; and they communed and said, surely this is like felling the bears-skin.

64. And being filled with an incorrupt spirit, they prophesied; but with a lying spirit they did not prophecy for that the squad had used.

65. And one of the chief among them of the name of M—— arose, and he was of the kindred of Hiram of Tyre who was also a Mason, and his freedom had not left him.

66. And he spoke of justice, of law, of conscience, and of tribulation; but the squad grinned as they meddled not with things above their reach, but did the ways of villainy with patience and perseverance.

67. For they confided in Fr——k and his tricks; although some had lost their feathers in so doing, and were become foolish as a plucked GOSLING.

68. And M——gs of Gilgal ordered the sayings of M—— of the kindred of Hiram to be registered in the book of their acts; and the same remaineth as a testimony of honour, although it was otherwise intended.

69. And S——s returned to his house and told to Betty and to his help-mate, all that had been done; and they rejoiced with great joy; but they held their feasting in a private chamber, for they feared the rat-catcher, as the day of his second advent drew nigh.